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Contact: Fred Clark, fclark@wigreenfire.org

Governor Evers has Listened and Acted to Protecting the Public Trust in Wisconsin's Waters



Lakeshore State Park in Milwaukee, WI. Photo: Virginia Small

Rhineland, WI – Wisconsin's Green Fire thanks Governor Tony Evers for vetoing legislation that would allow private development on the beds of lakes and rivers without proper consideration of the public's ownership and rights in Wisconsin's waters. Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine, which is embodied in our State Constitution, holds those lakebeds and riverbeds in trust for all citizens.

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Senate Bill 900 would have allowed commercial and residential developers to claim and privatize lakebeds and riverbeds that are now held in trust for citizens under the longstanding constitutional provision known as the Public Trust Doctrine. While Wisconsin's Green Fire understands legitimate concerns about interpretation of the Public Trust Doctrine along shorelines, especially in urbanized communities, we joined other groups in requesting a veto of SB 900 because the proposed legislation would have opened the door to broad commercialization of what are now public lands without adequate provisions to ensure continued public benefits and public use.

As Governor Evers stated about SB 900 in his veto message, *"it would open the door to whittling away of public lands by allowing transfer ... to private entities without a rigorous review process."* We know the Governor considered all sides of this issue and we applaud him for listening to a majority of Wisconsin citizens in making this decision.

"Wisconsin's Green Fire looks forward to continuing to work on Wisconsin's environmental and conservation priorities with Governor Evers, legislators from both parties, municipal officials, interested citizens who use these public lands, and with federal and state agencies," said Michael Cain, Wisconsin's Green Fire member and retired Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources attorney. *"Conservation issues in Wisconsin affect all of us and we all win when we can place science and evidence over partisan politics."*

Wisconsin's Green Fire is a nonpartisan and independent organization whose members represent extensive experience in natural resource management, environmental law and policy, scientific research, and education. <http://www.wigreenfire.org/>
